

Communities across South Alabama, and up and down the Gulf Coast, were stunned by the Pentagon's recent decision to award Boeing the new Air Force tanker contract. After reviewing the bids, EADS announced on Friday that it will not protest the award.

This officially ends the six year effort to bring the \$40 billion tanker contract to Mobile.

I, for one, have some serious concerns over a tanker selection process which discounts the superior EADS aircraft already being built, in favor of a minimalist Boeing design, which has yet to see the light of day. I have submitted a list of questions to Defense Secretary Gates asking for a full accounting of the award process.

I believe Boeing simply bought the contract with a low-ball bid, and I sincerely hope our military and taxpayers are not the ultimate losers if Boeing fails to deliver. Our military needs a new tanker now and EADS already has its KC-45 aircraft in production.

Boeing will be held to account for both its low bid and its promise to deliver the new tankers on schedule.

Above all, this is more than a contest for local jobs, but also a competition to ensure that America's military inherits a fully capable tanker that meets evolving mission requirements for the next 50 years.

Regardless of the final outcome, one fact is undisputed. South Alabama has benefitted from the attention this world class contest has given our area.

Our determination to go toe-to-toe with Boeing in the tanker competition has strengthened the marketability of our region, showcasing the ability of our community to stand behind major economic development projects, while also highlighting the advantages of our skilled workforce, port facilities and abundant resources.

The spotlight will remain bright here at home as we build on the success of existing and new industries like ThyssenKrupp and Austal USA, while promoting our strategic location, talented and motivated labor pool and attractive climate.

### **Staying the Course on Federal Spending Cuts:**

Amid the backdrop of a potential federal government shutdown, last week the U.S. House and Senate approved a temporary spending measure, which keeps the government funded for another two weeks.

The short extension allows time for the Senate and the White House to consider a 2011 spending plan with \$100 billion in cuts and reduced spending already passed by the House on

February 19. The two-week “continuing resolution” also cuts federal spending this year by another \$4 billion.

Taken together, the cuts are a positive first step toward House Republicans’ long-term goal of reversing Washington’s chronic overspending. They also keep faith with our “Pledge to America” to reduce federal spending by \$100 billion overall compared to President Obama’s FY 2011 budget request.

Despite the heated rhetoric from the left, these cuts have been carefully thought out in order to return federal spending to the 2008 level, before government spending began to dramatically skyrocket. From fiscal 2008 to fiscal 2010, non defense discretionary federal spending increased by nearly 25 percent. President Obama has also bloated the federal deficit by a record \$3.5 trillion over the last two years.

As most American families know, a person who is maxed out on their credit cards cannot get out of their financial hole by racking up more debt. In these times of high unemployment and a down economy, families are making tough budget choices, and Americans are demanding that Washington do the same. A February 24 Tarrance Group survey of likely voters reported that a majority agree that federal spending should be controlled.

Breaking it down, 36 percent said the House Republican cuts don’t go far enough and 31 percent said the cuts were adequate, while only 21 percent of those surveyed said the spending cuts went too far.

The first step toward tackling an addiction is to admit that you have a problem. For the sake of our country's future and the quality of life our children and grandchildren, government's overspending must be confronted and controlled now.

**Congratulations to Monroeville's Nelle Harper Lee:**

We're proud to note that South Alabama's resident Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Nelle Harper Lee was one of ten Americans honored last week with the National Medal of Arts. President Obama presented the awards at a White House ceremony on March 2.

Ms. Lee was unable to attend.

This was her second presidential recognition in the last four years.

In 2007, President George Bush presented Ms. Lee with the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Congratulations to Monroeville's Nelle Harper Lee, whose classic novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, continues to inspire millions worldwide.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.